



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner

Brian Greenway, Police Chief
Doug Treat, Police Sergeant
Matt Smith, Police Corporal
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Brady Preheim
Cortney Madruga

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Scholl said the Pledge of Allegiance.

VISITOR COMMENTS – *Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Brady Preheim. He is opposed to Resolution No. 1911. The Ad-Hoc Committee was not representative of the citizens of St. Helens. It did not include lower income committee members. The chair and vice chair do not even live in the City. Even some of the former Council members are opposed to it. It was inferred that low-income people are more crime-ridden. He does not think that is true. He resents the implied classism that renters would be getting off if it were done through a property tax because they do not pay property taxes. He would like to see the statistics that show poor people or renters use more police services. Landlords pass the taxes onto their renters. He also complained about moving the meeting videos away from Facebook. It was more accessible than YouTube. Was that to make it harder for people to view meetings? He would like to see the proposed public safety fee put out to a vote. People are calling to defund the police. For the Council to be talking about spending this kind of money at this time, is atrocious. No one is going to vote for more taxes. People are hurting. People were complaining about \$2 for the recreation program. They will go crazy if the City adds \$11. He voted for the majority of the Council but if they approve it, he will not vote for them again. Now is not the time. We do not need this now.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution No. 1910: A Resolution Adopting the St. Helens Industrial Business Park Parcelization Framework and Funding Plan

Mayor Scholl read Resolution No. 1910 by title. Motion made by Councilor Birkle and seconded by Council President Morten to adopt Resolution No. 1910.

Discussion.

Councilor Topaz agreed that the City needs to prepare the property for an industrial park, but the particular plan put forward has a lot of problems. He is most concerned about the contaminated waterfront and no one interested in using it for a business. In some of the areas, it was mis-designed. The need for high-grade clean air...it really bothers him with the cooling pond and sewer plant right there. The costs to clean up the building would be horrendous. He is in support of redoing the facility but the particular plan is where he has technical problems.

Councilor Chilton asked when Phase I would begin? Walsh responded that they could move fairly quickly with it. They are exploring grant opportunities. Utilities are fairly available. He agreed with Councilor Topaz. It is not going to look exactly like the proposal. There will be adaptations as it is developed. Associate Planner Dimsho added that it is also going to depend on whether or not they are successful with receiving grants and acquiring funding for the infrastructure needed along Kaster. There is a list of grant opportunities at the end of the report, but they are competitive.

Councilor Topaz pointed out that a lot of the businesses are leaving the west coast. Portland and Oregon have been pushing out industry. His biggest problem is the statement of what they really want this industrial facility to look like without knowing what will go into it.

Council President Morten agreed. Flexibility is necessary in the framework plan. One huge problem is that there is no electricity. PGE is charging an enormous amount for electricity. A majority of the electricity is not safe in that area. What is the plan for electricity? Mayor Scholl pointed out that the information about the electricity was only found out a day or two ago. He does not want it to sound like the City is incompetent moving forward without it. They will get power there. Discussion ensued.

Dimsho pointed out that the parcelization framework did address the fact that power to the site is exclusively provided by PGE. They reached out to PGE planners and accommodated the expansion they wanted on site to give users adequate and safe power. City Administrator Walsh added that he had a phone meeting with PGE yesterday and meet again on Friday to discuss power needs on the site. The City could have done nothing with this property, but they made the conscious choice to get involved and take control of the community's long-term future. It is messy and complicated but will be worth it in the end.

Councilor Birkle clarified that this is a conceptual framework to move forward. When it comes time to make development decisions, it will come back to Council.

Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

Council President Morten's yea vote was with the understanding that this is a conceptual plan and is not rigid in its design. Councilor Topaz agreed.

2. Resolution No. 1911: A Resolution of the St. Helens City Council to Accept the Recommendation of the Public Safety Ad-Hoc Committee and Honor Citizen Engagement

Mayor Scholl read Resolution No. 1911 by title. Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Councilor Chilton to adopt Resolution No. 1911.

Discussion.

Mayor Scholl referenced Brady's comments made at the beginning of the meeting. This is just a first step in a long process of community outreach, and a potential vote. They are in desperate need of a new police station. It is way too small and outdated. It is time to bring our city into the 21st century.

Brown clarified that the resolution does not automatically add a fee to utility bills, enact a public safety fund, or start the process for a general obligation bond. This is an acknowledgement of the Ad-hoc Committee's work and their recommendation.

Councilor Birkle gave his respect to Brady for his comments. Some of it reflects the letter received from former Councilor Carlson. People often do not step forward to serve on commissions or committees because of concerns with public criticism. It is important to acknowledge the members who did step up to be involved. As far as the comment about the number of individuals who are not residents of St. Helens, residency is not required for participating on our other boards and commissions. Some of them may do business in our community. He takes to heart Brady's comments about including diversity on the committee, such as the Spanish-speaking population. As for necessity, this is not just a police station. It includes court and other benefits to the City. In regard to defunding the police, he does not believe that is the case in St. Helens. He and his daughter participated in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) march on June 3rd, he and his wife participated in the Juneteenth march, he contributed to putting up the BLM billboard, and he is a strong advocate for addressing issues of inequity, injustice, and diversity in the community. He believes the St. Helens Police Department performs an important job. He wants to have a well-trained group of professionals who can respond to situations. He hopes to find additional types of funding. How can we support other issues our police are requested to respond to? For these reasons, he will vote in favor of the resolution. As Mayor Scholl stated, this is part of the process. He will do his part to encourage community engagement.

Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

3. Extension of Agreement with Lower Columbia Engineering, LLC for Consulting Services for the Columbia Pacific Food Bank Project

Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Councilor Birkle to approve '3' above. Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

4. Reappoint Dan Cary and Appoint Shana Cavanaugh to the Planning Commission

Motion made by Councilor Birkle and seconded by Councilor Topaz to approve '4' above.

Discussion.

Councilor Birkle recognized Greg Cohen's 19 years of service on the Planning Commission.

Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

5. Parks & Trails Commission Minutes dated December 14, 2020

Motion made by Council President Morten and seconded by Councilor Topaz to approve '5' above. Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

6. Council Work Session, Executive Session, Public Hearing, and Regular Session Minutes dated January 6, 2021
7. Declare Surplus Property - Library Equipment
8. Declare Surplus Property - PW Vehicles/Equipment
9. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Council President Morten to approve '6' through '9' above. Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

RFQ Projects Award

Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Council President Morten for the Council to accept the selection committee's recommendation of Mayer Reed as most qualified for the St. Helens Riverwalk Design, Construction and Permit Documents project and direct staff to prepare contract documents related to the project. Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Councilor Chilton for the Council to accept the selection committee's recommendation of OTAK as most qualified firm for the S. 1st and Strand Streets, Road, Utility extensions Design, Construction and Permit Documents project and direct staff to prepare contract documents related to the project. Voting Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

Action Items from Assistant City Administrator Brown

1. Does Council accept the Committee's recommendations to do a public safety fund vs. a GO bond?

It was the consensus of the Council to do a public safety fund.

2. Does Council agree with the staff proposal for the next steps, which includes a three-month community engagement, coming back to the Council in April with ordinance and resolution language, and make an informed decision based on community engagement?

Council agreed.

3. How does the Council want to be involved? Chief Greenway and police officers will be taking the lead on public engagement. They do want Councilors to be informed to speak with constituents. They are always welcome to attend presentations and get involved.

Councilor Birkle wants to be involved with outreach to Spanish-speaking residents.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN UPDATES

Brown spoke about the survey the Council conducted from Strategic Networks. The data is being gathered for a final report. Once it is finalized, he will bring it to the Council for review. There is some governance that will need to happen.

MAYOR SCHOLL REPORTS

- It is an exciting time to be on the Council. The City is moving forward at a rapid pace. There is so much happening.
- He looks forward to meeting with the Council at their upcoming retreat. It is very beneficial.
- Council and staff are being very cautious and thorough with development. Growth is going to happen.
- He hopes citizens stay involved. Hopefully, YouTube will connect to Facebook. Brown reported that web developers are still working to embed the YouTube video on the website. Mayor Scholl added that there is no conspiracy to hide information. Everything is open.
- He looks forward to returning to in-person meetings. It needs to start happening. It is a lot better to be conducting Council business at City Hall.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council President Morten reported...

- Received his first COVID vaccination today.

- He agreed with the Mayor's report.
- There has been a lot of activity in the parks. It is exciting to see.

Councilor Topaz reported:

- He has been approached by a few people in town to change the red light at Highway 30 and Columbia Blvd. to allow left turns under the proper conditions. He placed a memo in everybody's box encouraging the Council, Walsh, and engineers to proceed.
- He received a copy of the Bill of Sale for the marijuana place, which was signed August 28th and registered September 2nd. It says how much but not how we will get paid. He would like our attorney to write down the scenario of how this property was turned into surplus property, so everyone has a clear idea of the process to sell the property. A single-page document with only Walsh's signature almost looks illegal.

Councilor Birkle reported...

- He addressed another one of Brady's comments. It actually crossed his mind during the January 6th meeting, and he feels a little abashed that he did not respond at that time. There was a comment made that more police services are used in apartments and lower income housing areas. It could be implied or perceived in a pejorative way. It is important that they be careful when they are speaking. All of their residents are deserving of the same service from the Police Department. He regrets that he did not make this comment when he first heard it. He does not think it was intended to be pejorative but encouraged everyone to be careful when referring to citizens.
- He attended his first Planning Commission meeting as the Council liaison. He is very impressed by the work they do. He publicly recognized Greg Cohen's commitment over the last 19 years.
- He observed the Open Oregon Rally in front of Courthouse a couple Saturdays ago. He respects everyone's right to exercise their first amendment right. He was disturbed that a mayor from another Oregon city came to our town to encourage our local businesses to defy regulations. He does not believe that our mayor or another councilor would do the same in another community. He does hope the City can make it a priority to support and relieve local business owners through patronage.

Mayor Scholl agreed. It was misleading and he would not do that. The closures are State-mandated. They are not driven by the City. He does support small businesses and understands their struggles. It could be worse for them if they try to open and an accident occurs, which their insurance may not cover.

Council President Morten thanked Mayor Scholl for the comments. He thinks they should inform the League of Oregon City (LOC) about the incident. Mayor Scholl added that they had to pay for police overtime to be cautious and protect citizens. They did not apply for any permits. Council President Morten was concerned that we would ask our citizens to apply for a permit, but another mayor comes in and does not even try to contact the City first. He repeated the need to contact LOC.

Councilor Chilton reported...

- She met with Chief Greenway and the police leadership team. They were very welcoming. She is excited about the potential of a new police station for our community, her kids, and her neighbor's kids. It is desperately needed.
- Our police staff is amazing. In her day job, she is a Drug and Alcohol Counselor. Her involvement with police is very common. They are the most respectful and kind officers. We are very fortunate to have officers who care and have high standards.

City Administrator Report

- He talked about his role as City Administrator, serving the City Council, acting as chief of staff, and serving the best interest of businesses and citizens.

- He listed the agencies that the City is partnered with for community and economic development:
 - Columbia County Economic Team (CCET); he serves as a Board member
 - Columbia County Enterprise Zone
 - Columbia County Business Alliance
 - PPE for Columbia County
 - Distributed almost \$2 million of COVID grants
 - Columbia Pacific Economic Development District – four county taxing district; Mayor Scholl serves on the Board and Walsh also attends the monthly meetings
 - North Oregon Economic Development Alliance (NODA)
 - League of Oregon Cities (LOC); he serves as a Board member
 - Oregon Economic Development Association
 - St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency
 - Recently hired Rachael Barry as a government affairs representative
 - St. Helens Economic Development Committee (SHEDCO)
 - Community Action Team; Brown serves as a Board member
 - South Columbia County Chamber of Commerce
 - Oregon City Managers Association (OCMA); he serves a Board member
- Increased communications.
- They are spread thin and doing a lot.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that Walsh participates in meetings for all the agencies he just listed. Walsh agreed that they are highly engaged. The City has an awesome management team. Mayor Scholl is proud of Walsh. He does a good job.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURN – 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl

Rick Scholl, Mayor